

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN THE DIET - a strong minority

In the recent election campaign, 23 of the 1020 candidates (2.2%) were members of Christian churches. As a result of the election on February 27, 15 of the 476 members of the new Diet (3.2%) are members of Christian churches. Although percentage-wise this may seem to be small, compared to the even smaller proportion of Christians to non-Christians in this country (0.5%) it is remarkably large. It is, in fact, six times as large as one would normally expect.

In addition to this high proportion of Christians in the Diet, it is interesting to note the positions of outstanding leadership which many of them hold. The Chairman of the Right Socialist Party, Jyōtarō Kawakami; The Assistant General Secretary of the Democratic Party, Shutaro Matsuura; the former Speaker of the Diet, Komakichi Matsuoka; the Chairman of the section of International Liason of the Right Socialist Party, Mrs. Satoko Togano; all of these are active church members. Mr. Tokutaro Kitamura, former Minister of Finance in the Ashida Cabinet is also serving as the President of the Japan Christian Literature Society.

It is also significant that although the Socialists compose only one third of the membership of the new Diet, two thirds of the Christians elected are members of one or the other Socialist parties. This is indicative of the general tendency for Christians in Japan, especially the intellectuals, the women and the college students, to support the Socialist parties, feeling that they are more progressive. It may also be said that those five Christians who are members of the Democratic (Hatoyama) Party are leaders within their party for social reforms and progressive social legislation.

Over and above the fifteen members of Christian churches mentioned above, there are quite a few Diet members who have either been baptised or have had some connection with the Church. However their present relation to any specific fellowship of Christians is not quite clear to the editors and are not included. Ichiro Hatoyama, the new Premire is an example of this. He is said to have been baptized during his student days and enjoys singing hymns with his family in the evenings.

JAPAN PRAYS WITH THE WORLD - "transcendant unity"

Twice on February 25 an international group of Christians gathered in the Tokyo (American Army) Chapel Center to raise their hearts and voices in prayer. Symbolic of the international character of the World Day of Prayer, prayers were raised in several languages and gifts were given in both yen and script (American Army money). The women who had complete charge of arrangements and services were both American and Japanese; the speakers (both women) presented and then interpreted their own talks.

People gathered at two other churches in Tokyo and in churches all over Japan throughout the day. Although figures on attendance and offerings are not in for the whole nation yet, a total of seven hundred people participated in the public services in Tokyo and gave ¥50,000.00 as a symbol of dedicating themselves.

The money offered on this occasion will be sent to Burma and Korea for the relief of women and children. This is particularly significant in view of the bitter memories which most of the people of these nations hold against Japan. The Christian women of Japan hope through this gesture to symbolize the transcendant unity which we can find when we pray to God, and He lifts us beyond our human differences.

THIRD GOLDEN JUBILEE - a publication and a celebration

Just eighty years ago Robert Lilly of the Scottish Bible Society landed in Yokohama from Shanghai. Two years later, representatives of the American and the British Bible Societies arrived, and the work of United Bible Societies in Japan was well underway.

On April 15 at the Ginza Church, the Japan Bible Society will have a threefold celebration: The eightieth anniversary of the Japan Bible Society, the 150th anniversary of the (international) United Bible Societies, and the publication of the complete Bible in Colloquial Japanese.

Representatives from many countries are expected to come to this service. Rev. Laton E. Holmgren of the American Bible Society, Rev. John T. Watson of the British and Foreign Bible Society, Rev. Im Bin of the Korean Bible Society, Dr. H.M. Arrowsmith of the Australian Bible Society and Dr. R. Mortensen of the China Bible House are coming to participate in the celebration.

COLPORTEURS AT WORK - 50,000 copies in Fukuoka

Following the intensive campaign of six colporteurs in northern Kyushu since last fall, twelve workers started their Scripture distribution campaign in Fukuoka city beginning in January. They have distributed more than thirty thousand copies of Gospels in the city so far and are planning to distribute at least fifty thousand by the beginning of April.

ROYAL LECTURER in Tokyo Women's Christian College

Prince Mikasa, the brother of the present Emperor Hirohito, will become a lecturer of the Tokyo Women's Christian College soon. This is the first time in Japanese history that a direct member of the Royal Family has taken a job in a public institution on a salary basis as any commoner would.

Since the war Prince Mikasa has made an intense study of ancient Hebrew culture and history. He is an active member of the Japan Christian Historian Association. Although not a Christian himself, the Prince is interested in Christianity.

Ancient Oriental History is the area in which Prince Mikasa will lecture in the Tokyo Women's Christian College.

LACOUR EVANGELISTIC TEAMS - return engagement

Because of the remarkable success of the Lacour Evangelistic Teams in North Japan last summer (see JCAN Sept. 1, p.4), the Japanese Church is inviting Mr. Lacour and his co-workers back to work here again this coming summer.

Under the sponsorship of a special Lacour Evangelistic Commission of the Japan Centenary Movement:

- 1) The work started in Fukushima ken last summer will be nurtured and encouraged.
- 2) Two new centers of Christian work in the Tokyo area will be started.
- 3) The Osaka-Kobe area of Japan will be the main center of concentrated evangelistic work.

To raise the necessary money for this huge campaign (budgeted \$12,000 for expenses in Japan), Rev. Tomio Muto is now touring the United States on a speaking and preaching tour. Mr. Muto is the Vice President of the "The Christ Week" an independent Christian magazine. (see Time Magazine Pacific Edition, Feb. 1955, p. 10)

THE LIST - A STORY OF MINORITY